



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Mary and St John Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Street
North Luffenham
Oakham
Rutland
LE15 8JR

Diocese: Peterborough

Local authority: Rutland

Date of inspection: 11 March 2014

Date of last inspection: 15 October 2008

School's unique reference number: 120229

Headteacher: Mrs Fiona Wilce

Inspector's name and number: Revd Douglas Spenceley 368

School context

St Mary and St John is a smaller than the average-sized rural primary school, with 170 pupils. Currently a small but significant number of service children are from MOD North Luffenham, whose families will shortly be deployed. Nearly all pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of children with special educational or physical needs is below average. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The headteacher took up post in September 2013.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary and St John's as a Church of England school are good

- Clear Christian values, which are taught and modelled by staff and have a positive impact on pupil behaviour, relationships and attitude to learning and progress.
- Strong leadership and high expectations of the headteacher, motivated by her own Christian faith and supported by very committed staff and governors.
- The care for each child, especially those with significant needs, within the love of God
- Excellent links with the local church and the diocese.

Areas to improve

- Review and revise the school's Christian vision and documentation, so that it fully reflects the explicit Christian values which underpin the development of the school.
- Embed the monitoring and evaluation of the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a church school to inform accurately future developments.
- Secure comprehensive tracking and assessment for religious education (RE).

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners

The whole school community embraces the Christian values lived out daily in school and

attests to the 'spiritual warmth in the school – we feel it, the children feel it', as one parent expressed it. Caring relationships, the importance of teamwork, supporting others, forgiveness and second chances, which pupils relate back to Bible stories and the life and teaching of Jesus, contribute to very positive attitudes to learning, progress and levels of attainment, which are good. Standards are above the national average and pupils make good progress in their learning. The few incidences of poor behaviour are managed caringly in a way that 'lives family'. Attendance is very positive and there have been no exclusions. Parents comment on the good pastoral care the school provides. This is particularly evident in the care and targeted support offered to the small but significant number of children whose parents are in HM Armed Forces. Parents and those serving abroad appreciate very much the programme for writing postcards to serving military units in Afghanistan. Good examples of this are the teddy bear dressed in military combat gear, which week by week becomes part of different pupils' family life, and the careful liaison with the forces base, especially at key times for base personnel. Pupils are very sensitive to each other's needs, especially concerning those with challenging physical or learning needs. The large multi-faith/multi-cultural school in London they are twinned with has helped them develop a good understanding of, and respect for, other cultures and has reinforced their understanding of the lived out reality of other faiths. Attractive well presented RE and faith displays in each classroom focus on current topics studied and supplement the already vibrant colourful displays around the school. Each class annually designs and constructs their own large cross display, interpreting their thoughts and ideas of Christian values and prominently placed in the room. Pupils in Year R have contributed to a simple display of 'what it means to be a Christian' with phrases like 'being nice to others', 'helping', 'I sing to God in the church and during school', 'I pray to God'. These show early evidence of the good impact of the teaching of RE on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils engage enthusiastically with collective worship because of the good programme of high quality worship throughout the school year which teaches and exemplifies distinctly Christian values. The collective worship co-ordinator shares planning with staff and the parish priest. A Year 6 pupil spoke of school life as 'based on Christianity', where the values teach them 'how we should follow them in our daily work'. Pupils generally make connections between how they behave, relate to and care for one another and a wide range of Jesus' parables and Bible stories. From the story of the widow and the lost coin, one pupil reflected that 'what God does when we go astray and are found again is have a party'. Pupils show a good age-appropriate understanding of many theological concepts, including the Trinity, linking aspects of the Trinity to different stages of Jesus' life death and resurrection, and the early church. Prayer is a natural part of the school day. Pupils show developing understanding of the nature and power of prayer in their regular writing and using prayers in class at key points in the day. The daily Christian act of worship, 'assembly' includes the key elements of typically Anglican worship. Prayers are both formal, such as the Lord's Prayer, and informal, such as those composed by pupils. Local clergy and other visitors regularly take assembly, which the pupils look forward to. The school week starts with a service in the parish church on Monday, led by the rector. He comments on its impact that 'it sets the tone for the week'. Year 6 pupils take their responsibility for developing the service and preparing and leading intercessions very seriously. Preparation classes for Confirmation attended by a number of Year 6 pupils are seen by the rector and others as a direct result of the high emphasis placed on good quality worship and the Christian values taught and modelled. Parents and governors attend the worship in church and at the Friday celebration assembly, providing very positive, affirming feedback in recent surveys. Parents clearly endorse the distinctively Anglican Christian worship and value collective worship as a time for gathering, sharing faith and developing spiritual understanding. Collective worship is not yet outstanding because formal procedures for monitoring and evaluating acts of worship introduced since the arrival of the new headteacher have not had time to become fully embedded.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE is seen by the school community as a key part of the curriculum in this Aided school. The Agreed Syllabus for RE in Northamptonshire is followed. Pupils are confident in their understanding of the topics covered. Standards in RE at both Key Stage 1 and 2 are in line with other subjects and with national expectations. Teachers have good subject knowledge and the quality of their teaching is good. This evidences itself in the varied approaches to learning, differentiated activities and generous time for exploration, analysis and interpretation. Hence, pupils enjoy RE and participate well in lessons. They are able to make connections between what they learn in RE with their own spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. What they learn in RE has a positive impact on their day-to-day behaviour, attitudes and relationships as well as other relevant subject areas. They talk of how some of the teaching about faith teaches them 'to treat others how you want to be treated yourself'. Pupils have a confident knowledge and understanding of the different faiths they study and how they relate to and compare with Christianity. In a module on Judaism, some Key Stage 1 pupils were helped to connect Moses and the final plague with Jesus and the Cross. Robust formal tracking, monitoring and evaluation systems have been put in place this academic year. Baseline assessments and comparative data are in place for all pupils. The headteacher in her role as RE co-ordinator, applies the same tracking systems to RE as have been judged good in other core areas of the curriculum. She shows excellent capacity to drive the management of RE with the same rigour as all other curriculum areas.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good

The headteacher, who was appointed for the beginning of this academic year, is driven by high expectations and her strong personal Christian faith. This was a key appointment for the very committed governors, who have managed the school through a difficult period of school development and leadership changes during the last five years. It has already begun to yield positive results. The headteacher has reinforced the focus for Christian ethos to be at the heart of the school's daily life. This drives the raising of standards through the teaching and modelling of Christian values specifically developed in RE and assembly. For example, moving the weekly service in church to be the opening activity at the start of the week sets a new tone rooted in Christian worship for the whole week. A governor notes that, 'the church is very much part of the school community'. Links with the local church are strong. The diocesan education team has provided good support for the school and the headteacher, especially during the last year. Parents are vociferous in their support for the school. They feel the school is welcoming and open for them to come in and discuss their children's progress and concerns. Both RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. The school is involved actively in local community events and charitable fund raising, such as Sport Relief. The headteacher is currently working on developing key staff in their middle and senior leadership skills. Governing body meetings regularly include discussion of the school's Christian foundation as it relates to specific school issues. Leaders and governors are, however, in the early stages of reviewing the school's Christian vision and values and making them more explicit in documentation. In the five years leading to the appointment of the new headteacher, governor focus was on ensuring stable good quality leadership and the maintenance and improvement of standards of achievement. The four foci for development from the last inspection were not fully addressed in that time, but significant progress has been made with all four areas in the seven months since the headteacher took up post. The school is thus not yet outstanding because secure formal systems for monitoring and evaluating the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a church school are not sufficiently embedded to evidence long-term improvement, although the early signs of impact are positive.